

Seattle Municipal Code

Title 23 - LAND USE CODE

Subtitle III Land Use Regulations

Division 2 Authorized Uses and Development Standards

Chapter 23.44 - Residential, Single-Family

Subchapter I Principal Uses Permitted Outright

SMC 23.44.010 Lot requirements.

A. **Minimum Lot Area**. The minimum lot area shall be:

S.F. Zone Required	Minimum Lot Area
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S.F. 9600	9,600 sq. ft.
S.F. 7200	7,200 sq. ft.
S.F. 5000	5,000 sq. ft.

Submerged lands shall not be counted in calculating the area of lots for the purpose of these minimum lot area requirements, or the exceptions to minimum lot area requirements provided in this section.

B. Exceptions to Minimum Lot Area. The following exceptions to minimum lot area are subject to the limits of subsection B5. A lot which does not satisfy the minimum lot area requirements of its zone may be developed or redeveloped as a separate building site according to the following:

1. In order to recognize separate building sites established in the public record under previous codes, to allow the consolidation of very small lots into larger lots, to adjust lot lines to permit more orderly development patterns, and to create additional buildable sites out of oversized lots which are compatible with surrounding lots, the following exceptions are permitted if the Director determines that:

- a. The lot was established as a separate building site in the public records of the county or City prior to July 24, 1957 by deed, contract of sale, mortgage, property tax segregation, platting or building permit and has an area of at least seventy-five (75) percent of the minimum required lot area and at least eighty (80) percent of the mean lot area of the lots on the same block face and within the same zone in which the lot is located (Exhibit 23.44.010 A , or

- b. The lot is or was created by subdivision, short subdivision or lot boundary adjustment, and is at least seventy-five (75) percent of the minimum required lot area and is at least eighty (80) percent of the mean lot area of the lots on the same block face within which the lot will be located and within the same zone (Exhibit 23.44.010 A ; or

2. The lot area deficit is the result of a dedication or sale of a

portion of the lot to the City or state for street or highway purposes and payment was received for only that portion of the lot, and the lot area remaining is at least fifty (50) percent of the minimum required; or

3. The lot would qualify as a legal building site under this section but for a reduction in lot area due to court-ordered adverse possession, and the amount by which the lot was so reduced was less than ten (10) percent of the former area of the lot, provided, that this exception shall not apply to lots reduced to less than fifty (50) percent of the minimum area required under subsection A of Section 23.44.010; or

4. The lot was established as a separate building site in the public records of the county or City prior to July 24, 1957 by deed, contract of sale, mortgage, property tax segregation, platting or building permit, and falls into one (1) of the following categories; provided that, lots on totally submerged lands shall not qualify for this exception:

a. The lot is not held in common ownership with any contiguous lot on or after the effective date of the ordinance from which this subsection derives,¹ or

b. The lot is or has been held in common ownership with a contiguous lot on or after the effective date of the ordinance from which this subsection derives and is or has been developed with a principal structure which is wholly within the lot boundaries; provided, that no portion of any contiguous lot is required to meet the least restrictive of lot area, lot coverage, setback or yard requirements which were in effect at the time of the original construction of the principal structure, at the time of its subsequent additions, or which are in effect at the time of redevelopment of the lot (Exhibit 23.44.010 B

c. The lot is or has been held in common ownership with a contiguous lot on or after the effective date of the ordinance from which this subsection derives¹ and is not developed with all or part of a principal structure; provided, that no portion of the lot is required to meet the least restrictive of lot area, lot coverage, setback or yard requirements which were in effect for a principal structure on the contiguous lot at the time of the construction of the principal structure, at the time of its subsequent additions, or which are in effect at the time of the development of the lot (Exhibit 23.44.010 B ; and provided further, that if any portion of the lot to be developed has been used to meet the parking requirement in effect for a principal structure on a contiguous lot, such parking requirement can and shall be legally met on the contiguous lot.

For purposes of this subsection B4, removal of all or any part of a principal structure or destruction by fire or act of nature on or after the effective date of the ordinance from which this subsection derives¹ shall not qualify the lot for the minimum lot area exception (Exhibit 23.44.010 C except that minor features containing no interior floor area including but not limited to eaves and unenclosed decks extending onto an adjacent property do not serve to tie the properties together for purposes of this exception, and these features may be removed to allow separate development of the lots if

they otherwise qualify; or

5. Development may occur on a substandard lot containing a riparian corridor, a shoreline habitat and shoreline habitat buffer, a wetland and wetland buffer, or a steep slope and steep slope buffer pursuant to the provisions of SMC Chapter 25.09, Regulations for Environmentally Critical Areas, if the following conditions apply:

- a. The substandard lot is not held in common ownership with an adjacent lot or lots at any time after the effective date of SMC Chapter 25.09, Regulations for Environmentally Critical Areas, or
- b. The substandard lot is held in common ownership with an adjacent lot or lots, or has been held in common ownership at any time after the effective date of SMC Chapter 25.09, Regulations for Environmentally Critical Areas², but proposed and future development will not intrude upon the environmentally critical area or buffer;

6. Lots contained in a clustered housing planned development (Section 23.44.024), a planned residential development (Section 23.44.034), or a clustered development in an environmentally critical area.

C. Maximum Lot Coverage. The maximum lot coverage permitted for principal and accessory structures is as follows:

Lot Size	Maximum Lot Coverage
Less than 5,000 square feet (sq ft)	1,000 sq ft + 15% of lot area
5,000 sq. ft. or more	35% of lot area

D. Lot Coverage Exceptions.

1. Lots Abutting Alleys. For purposes of computing the lot coverage only:

- a. The area of a lot with alley or alleys abutting any lot line may be increased by one-half (1/2) the width of the abutting alley or alleys.
- b. The total lot area for any lot may not be increased by the provisions of this section by more than ten percent (10%).

2. Special Structures and Portions of Structures. The following structures and portions of structures shall not be counted in lot coverage calculations:

- a. Access Bridges. Uncovered, unenclosed pedestrian bridges of any height necessary for access and five (5) feet or less in width;
- b. Barrier-free Access. Ramps or other access for the disabled or elderly meeting Washington State Building Code, Chapter 11;
- c. Decks. Decks or parts of a deck which are thirty-six (36) inches or less above the existing grade;
- d. Freestanding Structures and Bulkheads. Fences, arbors and

freestanding walls except bulkheads, signs and other similar structures;

e. Underground Structures. An underground structure, or underground portion of a structure, may occupy any part of the entire lot;

f. Eaves and Gutters. The first thirty-six (36) inches of eaves and gutters projecting from principal and accessory structures, except that eaves associated with the roof of an arbor shall be included in lot coverage calculations;

g. Solar collectors meeting the provisions of Section 23.44.046 and swimming pools meeting the provisions of Section 23.44.044.

(Ord. [122823](#) , Section 2, 2008; Ord. [122050](#) Section 5, 2006; Ord. [121476](#) Section 5, 2004; Ord. [119239](#) Section 6, 1998; Ord. [118414](#) Section 6, 1996; Ord. 117263 Section 7, 1994; Ord. 116262 Section 7, 1992; Ord. 116205 Section 2, 1992; Ord. 115686 Section 1, 1991; Ord. 113883 Section 1, 1988; Ord. 113297 Section 1, 1987; Ord. 113216 Section 1, 1986; Ord. 111390 Section 6, 1983; Ord. 110793 Section 3, 1982; Ord. 110669 Sections 12(part), 32(part), 1982; Ord. 110381 Section 1(part), 1982.)